

Issue 3

Spring 2010

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT FOR NATURAL RESOURCES

NATURAL RESOURCE REVIEW



Photo: Rue Anemone
By: Rose Moore

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The department, through its divisions and partnerships, provides technical assistance, education and funding to help landowners, institutions, industries, and communities in conserving and sustaining Kentucky's natural resources. In addition, the department inspects timber harvests and mining operations to ensure the protection of our citizens, our environment, and our workers.



Commissioner's Corner

**By Carl E. Campbell, Commissioner
Department for Natural Resources**

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you know, the industries we serve and regulate are facing difficult and changing times. In the area of forestry and conservation, the business of biomass and biofuels are being aggressively researched and viewed as renewable energy sources. If this research proves viable, it could provide a huge economic boost for Kentucky. With our state's 12 million acres of forestland and 10 million acres of farmland, the potential advantages to Kentucky landowners are enormous. The Divisions of Forestry and Conservation will lead the effort in developing regulations and legislation that will assist these growing industries while preserving and conserving our soil and water resources.

New testing and implementation of carbon sequestration in Kentucky has made great strides in proving the viability of this process. Permanent storage of CO₂ will reduce the effects of greenhouse gases but must be well regulated to ensure the permanence and safety of the long-term storage. The Division of Oil and Gas has been charged with regulating this new process. Once this new technology is proven successful, the geologic formations beneath the surface will be used for this purpose, reducing problems of atmospheric pollution and creating new financial opportunities for those who work in this developing area.

The coal mining industry, as it adapts to the world's changing view of this resource has also stimulated new and innovative ideas. The Department recently spearheaded a multi-agency collaboration resulting in the publishing of a new mining protocol called the Fill Placement Optimization Process (FPOP). This new program will address and alleviate many of the concerns regarding the footprint of mining within the mountainous areas of Eastern Kentucky. Implementation of this alternative analysis will result in fewer and smaller fills, reduction of stream length impact and the enhancement of the re-graded reclamation contours thereby avoiding a flattened appearance. By developing this alternative method of mining and reclamation, Kentucky is on the leading edge of developing mining protocols that meet the stringent environmental requirements of the federal SMCRA and the Clean Water Act while also ensuring the continued viability of our coal industry. The end result being that coal companies that use this method will reclaim their sites to a configuration that more closely approximates the original mountain slopes that existed prior to mining, while minimizing water quality impacts to streams and the aquatic communities.

One can clearly see that our Department, while facing diminished funding like all state and federal agencies, has enormous challenges and possibilities on the horizon. We remain committed to protecting our soil, air, and water resources, while assisting Kentuckians in these new and exciting changes that will affect the economic living and working conditions of our citizens and communities.

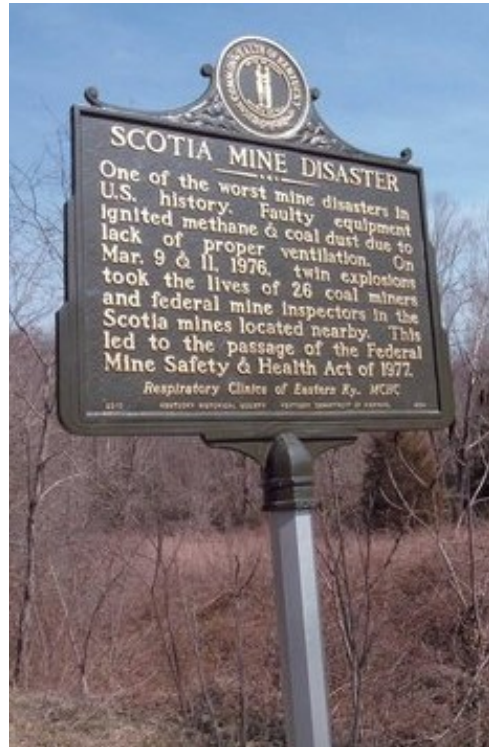
Carl E. Campbell
Commissioner

Office of Mine Safety and Licensing Participates in Memorial Service

A marker placed on U.S. 119 at Oven Fork on March 9, 2010 marks the 34th anniversary of two explosions that killed 26 miners and mine inspectors in three days. OMSL Executive Director Johnny Greene was one of several speakers who addressed the crowd of 100 family members and officials paying tribute to those who lost their lives in the Scotia mine disaster of 1976. The programs under his direction are focused on preventing such a disaster from ever happening again.

The first explosion, set off when faulty equipment ignited methane built up in a poorly ventilated mine, was on March 9, 1976. The second explosion occurred two days later as miners and inspectors reached the site of the first explosion to investigate and document problems in the mine.

State Representative Leslie Combs was a featured speaker and paid tribute to the men whose names appear on the bronze marker. She also complimented the progress made by the industry and the development of more strenuous laws that regulate safety in coal mines. The historical marker was sponsored by the Mountain Comprehensive Health Care Corporation.



Historic marker placed on Hwy 119 near Oven Fork

Executive Director, Johnny Greene, addressed family members and officials at the March 9th Memorial event



Did You Know ?

The Office of Mine Safety and Licensing is placing a special emphasis on training mine foremen to identify and correct unsafe work practices by coal miners. The future reduction of accidents depends largely on company management observing and correcting unsafe work practices. After observing miners at work, twelve (12) percent of their work habits were documented as unsafe by safety analysts, potentially causing injury to that worker or a nearby co-worker. Statistics show that fifty percent of these unsafe acts were mine foremen who committed the unsafe act, or allowed an unsafe act to be committed under his/her supervision. Mine safety analysts are working with miners and foremen on a daily basis to improve conditions in the areas where accidents and fatalities occur most frequently.

Seedling Nurseries: Growing Trees for Healthy and Productive Forests

By Lynn Brammer

All Kentuckians benefit from our trees and forests. Whether a dense stand of hardwoods in the east, a riparian forest along the rivers in the west, or a stately bur oak in the Bluegrass, every Kentuckian will breathe the clean air, drink the clean water, enjoy the wildlife habitat and use the products derived from our forests.

Forestry is also big business in Kentucky and wood-using industries are located throughout the state. In fact, Kentucky's wood industry employs over 30,000 people and contributes \$4.5 billion annually to Kentucky's economy. The source of most of our timber and the primary component to the wood industry is the private landowner, who own 89% of Kentucky's forests. Unfortunately, most woodland owners are not prepared to grow and sustain a forest, therefore they often rely on resource agencies like the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) for assistance with forest management and tree care.

One of the most important services KDF provides to landowners, as well as to communities and other agencies, is the operation and maintenance of two seedling nurseries. The nurseries offer over 50 different species of conifers and hardwoods for use in establishing timber stands, improving wildlife habitat, restoring streamside buffers, promoting urban forestry and reclaiming surface mining sites. The feature tree for our spring issue is the Shumard Oak—one of over 20 oak species grown at the nurseries.

Seedlings are available each fall and spring on a first-come, first-serve basis. Anyone interested in ordering seedlings should visit the KDF Web site at <http://www.forestry.ky.gov/seedling/> or contact KDF at 1-800-866-0555.

Shumard Oak (*Quercus shumardii*)

Growth: The Shumard Oak's growth rate is rapid under optimum conditions of adequate moisture and deep soils. It may reach 100-125 feet tall by 4-5 feet in diameter at maturity.

Sites: Shumard Oak prefers constantly moist but well-drained, deep, rich soils that have variable pH. It thrives in full to partial sun and is shade tolerant in youth.

Range: Shumard Oak is mostly a southern species, encompassing territory from North Carolina to Texas, and northward to the lower Midwest.

Human Uses: The wood is typically marketed with other red oaks, though it may be of higher quality than other associated species. It is used for flooring, furniture, interior trim and cabinetry.

Wildlife Uses: Relatively large acorns provide a valuable food source for wild turkey, quail, white-tailed deer, various songbirds and other wildlife.

Tree Trivia: As a member of the Red Oak group and the Beech Family, Shumard Oak is related to the Beeches, Chestnuts and other Oaks. Shumard Oak is a valuable landscape tree as it typically grows upright and will not crowd out nearby trees or buildings as it ages.



Shumard Oak produces relatively large acorns and are a valuable food source for many of Kentucky's wildlife

First Oil Well Drilled in Kentucky— 1818 — in McCreary County

By Marvin Combs

The demand for salt as a food preservative led an iron furnace operator, Martin Beatty from Abingdon, Virginia to drill a well for natural salt brine at the Fork of the Cumberland River in McCreary County. The well was “spudded” in the spring of 1818 using a spring pole cable tool rig. At a depth of approximately 200 ft. heavy black crude oil was encountered and flowed into the Cumberland River. Initial production was reported to be 100 barrels of oil per day. Beatty abandoned intentions of producing salt from the well and established a salt works 2 miles downstream at the mouth of Bear Creek. He hired two fishermen, Pierson Watson and John Spradling to ferry the oil downstream in wooden barrels. After failed attempts to transport the oil downstream, the oil was hauled overland by wagon and sold for the production of liniment and other medicinal purposes. The expense of hauling the oil soon led the venture to be abandoned. For a point of reference, the nation’s first well drilled specifically for oil production was drilled in 1859 by Edwin Drake in Pennsylvania.

The Division of Oil & Gas is working with the National Park Service-Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in Oneida, Tennessee to plug abandoned wells in the National Park. This joint venture will include the plugging of the Beatty well. Work on the project will begin in June, 2010.



Division of Mine Permits Document Reduction in the Backlog of Permit Applications

Newly Released Numbers Show Staffing Changes and Emergency Spending Key for Delinquency Reduc-

The number of delinquent coal mining permits is showing a very significant **22% reduction** after reaching a peak in late November 2009. When the figures are broken down by month, they show four successive months where the number of delinquencies has been reduced. The causes of this very positive trend are numerous but primarily focus on new leadership, additional staff hired with monies derived from Governor Beshear’s emergency order, increased training efforts, greater emphasis placed on management accountability, and a slight reduction in the number of new permit applications. This very positive trend is expected to continue.



Left: Paul Horn from Booth Energy (far left) provided a tour of an underground mine and other operations to newly hired permit reviewers and trainers.

Right: The field trip to Martin County provided a number of training opportunities for the newly hired employees.



Forestry Employee Receives National Award for Wildland Fire Prevention Efforts

Candie Mitchell Rewarded for Efforts in Wildland Fire Prevention

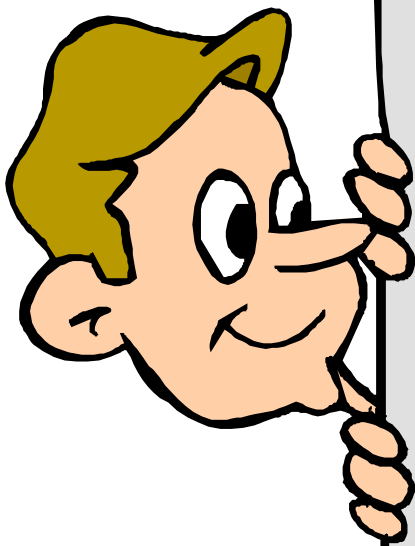
By Lynn Brammer

Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) Ranger Technician Candie Mitchell recently received the Robert E. Browning, Jr. Award for her excellence in wildland fire prevention efforts. The U.S. Forest Service, Southern Region, selected Mitchell for this honor based on her efforts to educate children and young adults about the dangers of forest fires. The award is given in honor of Robert E. Browning Jr., a South Carolina wildland firefighter who lost his life on Storm King Mountain, Colorado in 1994.

Mitchell is a forest ranger technician in Clay County and has been with KDF since 1999. She began her work with the KDF after graduating from the University of Kentucky's Forest and Wood Technology Program offered through Hazard Community Technical College. As a forest ranger technician, Mitchell fights forest fires, inspects timber harvest operations and conducts forest fire prevention education programs. She also works with residents, local officials, and the media to help prevent and reduce the number of fires.



"I am truly honored to receive the Robert E. Browning, Jr. Award. Over the past several years my work in the area of Fire Prevention has been one of the most rewarding and exciting aspects of my job," said Mitchell. I look forward to continuing my work with KDF in our efforts to reduce the amount of wildland fires in Kentucky and help protect our forests valuable resources."



Noteworthy News:

- **Allen Luttrell has been appointed as Director, Division of Mine Permits. Formerly he was the Assistant Director of the division. He has been with the Department for 20 years. Allen's appointment will be effective April 1, 2010.**
- **Sheila Vaughn has been appointed as Director, Division of Fiscal Management in the Tri-Cabinet General Administrative and Program Support (GAPS). Sheila was formerly Staff Assistant in the Commissioner's office. Her appointment will be effective April 1, 2010.**
- **The Department's Big Brother/ Big Sisters "Bowl for Kids Sake" fundraiser yielded \$1899.86 in donations this year for a very worthy cause. Multiple teams from five divisions participated. Our sincere thanks to all!**

Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement In Action

Inspectors maintain state-wide coverage in the enforcement of surface and underground mining



Robert Yonts and Glenn Lacy review maps on a surface mine site in Western Kentucky and determine that the permittee has properly constructed sediment ponds as designed. Specific geographic locations are also plotted using GPS technology to determine if the company is off permit. These sites sometimes cover thousands of acres.



After reviewing the county road conditions for dust, the inspector here took the opportunity to watch the loading process and covering of the payload. Each coal company is held responsible for controlling dust and watering the roads as needed to diminish particles in the air.



DMRE inspectors test the water in a Harlan County creek after a citizen's complaint. Water samples were collected and sent to the lab for prompt testing and action to protect water quality. Upstream the inspectors found a sediment pond with potential overflow problems that was cited and corrected.



In the London region, Jessica Sandlin is the phase three bond release specialist. This site has been properly moved through the phases of reclamation in the post-mining process. Jessica recently documented the condition of the former surface mine and released all remaining bonding requirements.

Carbon Capture and Sequestration in Kentucky, No Longer a Theory

Kentucky Division of Oil and Gas has permitted two experimental technology wells

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the most common of the man-made greenhouse gases generated by the burning of fossil fuels thought to contribute to global warming. Coal-fired power plants are a major source of carbon dioxide emissions. Permanent geologic storage of carbon dioxide is accomplished by compressing CO₂ to convert it from a gaseous state to a supercritical fluid state. Sequestration is accomplished by injecting CO₂ into geologic formations at a depth where temperature and pressures are sufficient to keep the CO₂ in a fluid state. Injection wells, regulated by the Division of Oil & Gas and USEPA must be drilled and cased in a manner to prevent vertical migration of the injected CO₂ and to have minimal impact on underground sources of drinking water, human health and the environment.

Basically, there are three classes of injection options that allow for permanent storage. The option first explored by industries in Kentucky has been injection into deep saline formations. Carbon storage has proven in other parts of the country to be viably injected into depleted oil and gas wells or into existing oil wells to increase productivity. This method will most certainly be tested and explored due to the amount of oil and gas wells in our state. Kentucky's third option is to inject into un-minable coal beds which has yet to be tested and permitted.

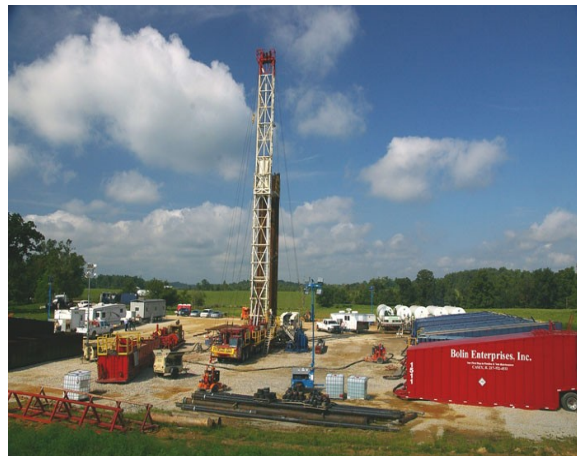
Kentucky's Deep Saline Formation Sequestration

The Kentucky Division of Oil & Gas and USEPA permitted two wells for CO₂ sequestration testing in deep saline formations. The wells were designated as Class V "experimental technology" wells by USEPA which require mechanical integrity testing (MIT) of the down-hole tubing/packer assembly and installation of offsetting groundwater monitoring wells.

Permit 105821 was permitted by Battelle-Duke Energy in Boone Co. in June, 2009 to test the feasibility for carbon sequestration in the Mt. Simon basal sandstone. The well is located on the property of the East Bend coal-fired power generating facility operated by Duke Energy. The well was drilled to a total depth of 3,700 ft. in August, 2009. An initial injection test was performed using 1,000 tons of CO₂ injected through perforations from 3,410 ft. to 3,510 ft. Testing results indicate the Mt. Simon sandstone is suitable for long-term sequestration.



Permit 105821 Wellhead-Boone Co. (Duke Energy-East Bend Coal-Fired Power Station in background)



Permit 104925 Drilling Rig-Hancock Co.

Permit 104925 was permitted by the Kentucky Geological Survey (UK) in November, 2008 and drilled by a consortium of energy companies to test the Knox formation for CO₂ sequestration in April, 2009. The well was drilled to a total depth of 8,126 feet, and approximately 323 tons of CO₂ was injected through perforations from 3,800 ft. to 7,400 ft. Additional testing and evaluation is continuing,

Kentucky recognizes the seriousness and significance of understanding the factors affecting CO₂ storage permanence, capacity, and protection of the geologic formations and terrestrial ecosystems. Once these issues are fully understood, new and existing power plants and fuel processing facilities in the U.S. and around the world will have the potential to be retrofitted with CO₂ capture technologies. Capturing and storing CO₂ from 700 large power plants would have the same effect of eliminating all the automobiles in the world.

Kentucky Division of Forestry Employees Attend Interagency Wildland Fire Training Academy

by Lynn Brammer

In January, the Division of Forestry (KDF) collaborated with other state and federal resource agencies including the Tennessee Division of Forestry, Daniel Boone National Forest, Cherokee National Forest, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area and the Fish and Wildlife Service Southern Region to sponsor the eighth annual Tennessee-Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy. Nearly 400 students, including 110 from Kentucky, and over 70 instructors attended the academy in Bell Buckle, Tennessee to advance their knowledge and skills in wildland fire suppression, prescribed fire, and Incident Command System.

The week-long academy offered 23 training courses ranging from basic wildland firefighting skills and air operations to courses for fireline supervisors and incident commanders. KDF's wildland firefighters, also known as Forest Ranger-Technicians and Foresters, are professionally trained to national Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards. Although newly hired employees receive basic training in firefighting operations with particular emphasis to safety and survival, firefighting techniques, fire behavior, weather, and use and care of firefighting equipment, the academy offers KDF's firefighters the opportunity to advance their skills through field exercises, lectures, and training from instructors with many years of wildland fire experience.

"The academy allows our firefighters to work and train with other agencies in an effort to make wildland fire response efforts safer and more efficient," said Bernie Andersen, Fire Management Chief for the Kentucky Division of Forestry. "We send as many students and instructors as possible to the academy each year."

The Tennessee-Kentucky Wildland Fire Academy is held each year to promote opportunities for all government agencies and other organizations to build skills and knowledge of wildland and prescribed fire that meets the National NWCG standards. The academy also operates under the Incident Command System promoted by NWCG for the purpose of simulating the operational organization of a wildland fire response incident. The academy will be donating \$250.00 to the Fallen Firefighter Foundation beginning this year.



Breathitt County Water Supply Project Provides for Over 500 Residences

Division of Abandoned Mine Lands Completes One of the Largest Projects in Its History

By Corey Ann Howard & Phillip Bowling

KY Hwy. 1110 is located in the south central sector of Breathitt County, KY between the communities of Haddix and Chavies on the North Fork of Kentucky River. This area consists of the following communities: Haddix, Howards Creek, Copeland, Whick, Sulphur Gap, Altro, Bowling Creek, Saldee, Wolf Coal, Bush Branch, Rose Hollow, Barwick, Stidham Town, and Strong's Branch.

Water in this area is considered a precious commodity that is not always available. Many families in the eastern-most sections of this area are often without water by mid-summer which requires them to haul water to their homes for the remainder of the hot summer. Community members have contacted Division of Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) personnel regarding the shortage of water and the poor well water quality in these communities.

AML initiated a groundwater study to determine if the groundwater in the area had been impacted by past mining. A review of the mine history of the Haddix area quickly revealed that significant coal mining operations were conducted in the past. The first documented mining was in a Cannel Coal seam in the early 1830s. The Howards Creek area had been mined in the 30s and 40s. Additional deep mining and surface mining occurred in the area through the 1970s.

The groundwater contamination study was conducted from October 2006 to March 2007. The study verified the suspected problem, i.e., the groundwater had in fact been impacted by past mining. This determination resulted in the area qualifying for an AML water supply replacement project.

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed between the Energy & Environment Cabinet and the Breathitt County Water District with an effective date of September 2007 to fund the design of the KY Hwy. 1110 AML Water Supply Project. The Breathitt County Water District procured Nesbitt Engineering, Inc. of Lexington, Kentucky to prepare the design. The design plans were completed in April 2008 and were submitted to AML for final approval. Phase I construction began in September 2008 and installed a water line from KY. Hwy. 397 to Haddix, and from KY Hwy. 1110 to the community of Altro, KY.

On July 1, 2009, a Memorandum of Agreement for Phase II of the project was approved and provided funding for the remaining areas connected by KY Hwy. 1110. G. & W. Construction of Morehead, Kentucky was awarded the low bid of \$1,753,497.41. Contract 2 of Phase II paid for a 150,000 gallon water supply tank. The tank contract was awarded to Laurel Construction Company of London, in the amount of \$296,050.00. The total contractual amount for Phase II was \$2,049,547.41.

The water system installed by the KY Hwy. 1110 Project is currently operated by the Breathitt County Water District and includes: one water storage tank, one pump station, two pressure reducing vaults, and approximately 33 miles of waterline. This water supply system will serve approximately 533 residences along the North Fork of the Kentucky River.

County Judge Jason Harvey Richardson stated, "Without the funding provided by the Kentucky Division of Abandoned Mine Lands program, this water supply system would have been impossible to construct in these areas."



Contractors work along Hwy 1110 to install the waterline to the many households that will benefit and finally have unlimited water in the hottest months of the year.

Billy Ratliff

Assistant Director, Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement

Billy Ratliff has been a hard-working and dedicated employee in the Department for Natural Resources, Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement for over 25 years. He began his career as a Reclamation Inspector at the Pikeville Regional Office where he served for 18 years. Through a series of promotions, he came to the Frankfort Central office as an Environmental Technologist, and later became Environmental Control Supervisor of the Assessments and Records Section. In 2007, he was promoted to Manager of the Field Enforcement Branch and since 2008, has served as Assistant Director of the Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement.

The responsibilities of Assistant Director are vast, requiring management and oversight of nearly all of the Division's daily activities, such as mine site inspections, enforcement actions, and technical investigations. The Division includes an inspection staff of nearly 100 personnel located in five regional offices, as well as technical specialists and administrative staff.

Billy is on-call for a wide range of emergency situations and frequently travels to remote areas of the state to assist in training, inspections, and special projects. He personally presides over all Pattern of Violation hearings and assists Director Jim Dickinson on a wide range of enforcement issues which often require coordination with multiple other state and federal agencies.

Billy's contributions have been indispensable to the daily operation of the Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement for many years. His passion for serving the people of the commonwealth is evidenced by his continued willingness to do whatever is required, and do it with a smile. Many in the Division know Billy for his "all business" work ethic when he is on the clock but his genuine concern and dedication to division employees is evident in all that he does. In his personal life, Billy is a dedicated family man and active in his church and community. The Division greatly appreciates all of the early mornings, late nights, and hours of persistent hard work Billy Ratliff has devoted over the years.



Division of Conservation Maintaining Services and Trainings

Pam Williams, Field Representative

When the Division of Conservation was confronted with responding to state budget reductions, one of the areas receiving attention was travel expenses which had to be significantly reduced. The impact of this requirement on field staff as well as Frankfort-based employees caused a profound change in the way the division conducts its work and coordination with the county conservation districts. Facing the division staff was the question of how to maintain a satisfactory level of services and training to conservation districts while adhering to the new travel limitations. After much discussion, a plan was developed that would involve some innovative and non-traditional methods of dealing with the issue.

Alternating the use of teleconferencing with visits on an every other month basis for conservation district monthly board meetings ensured that all could maintain their field representatives as a resource for assistance and service and keep the channels of communication open. Teleconferencing was also utilized as a tool for district supervisor's conferencing, KACD, and committee meetings, allowing the inclusion of all pertinent personnel from Frankfort staff, KACD, NACD and NRCS. Each organization was able to provide up-to-date information, answer questions on programs, budgets, legislation, audits and other discussion items. This meeting format has been utilized extensively by most district and state personnel resulting in a positive impact on service delivery while adhering to the travel restrictions. It has also become a very useful tool during district employees training session. District employees agree that the continued availability of training opportunities provided by the field representatives and the inclusion of the Frankfort staff via teleconference are huge benefits to their day to day responsibilities.

The most recent non-traditional component was the introduction of district supervisor's 10-minute training sessions. These sessions were designed and developed to replace the area district supervisors training sessions held each spring and fall and are now incorporated into monthly district board meetings. Each session will deal with a particular area of supervisor's responsibility and the instruction is provided by the assigned field representative.

The Division staff is very appreciative of the district board members and their employee's willingness to adjust their routines to accept these non-traditional methods of service delivery. The personal link between the districts and their field representative and Frankfort staff remains a vital component to achieving a highly successful program.



Area 8 Meeting in Fleming County



Supervisor's meeting in Grayson County

Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) plants 17,000 Trees

Dozens of volunteers are attending events planned every weekend in spring planting season

Decades of mining left abandoned land next to Pine Mountain Settlement School in Harlan County too disturbed to grow trees. The old refuse site was originally developed by Dollar Branch Coal Corp, but due to violations of performance standards, the reclamation bond was forfeited by the Cabinet. An agreed order provided for the reclamation to begin and use part of the earth cover from a nearby Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) project. Poorly vegetated coal refuse was polluting nearby greasy creek with its many acidic seeps and there was an abandoned preparation and washing plant on the 45 acre site. In 1999 reclamation of this AML site was completed but beneath the surface lay soil that could not grow trees or agricultural products.

After years of soil restoration, the ground is fertile once again and the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) is working to plant trees on old mine sites such as this one. On March 20, dozens of volunteers from colleges and organizations planted 17,000 trees on 25 acres of the site. Volunteers planted seedlings of pin oak trees, black locusts, hickory, and others. The students learned that local wildlife will greatly benefit from the improved habitat, as well as benefits of stabilizing soil erosion, providing carbon sequestration, and improving water resources. Funding for the seedlings used in the project was through AML's federal grant program.

There were several representatives from the Department for Natural Resources and the Department of Fish and Wildlife at the event. Commissioner Carl Campbell told the group, mostly comprised of students from nearby colleges, about the history of the property and praised them for their efforts in restoring the land to its natural habitat. "These young people are doing excellent work. It's worth every penny of what we're putting into it," he said.

"It is a win for the coal industry, win for the environment, and a win for the landowners," said Patrick Angel of the federal Office of Surface Mining, who also attended the event.

The goal of ARRI is to put back trees on hundreds of thousands of acres where they once stood, but which coal companies reclaimed as grassland after surface mining over the last three decades. Several more events are planned during the spring planting season. To read more, go to <http://arri.osmre.gov>.



Nina Martin (landowner), Jack Shell, and Rev. J Scott Martin (Landowner) with Commissioner Campbell (far right).



Students learned that the loosely disked ground better accommodates growth of the tree seedlings.

Division of Mine Reclamation and Enforcement and Office of Surface Mining Reach Out to the Community of Caney Fork

By Jim Dickinson, Director DMRE

On March 15, 2010, representatives from the Department for Natural Resources (DNR) and the Office of Surface Mining (OSM) participated in a meeting with the members of the Kentuckians for the Commonwealth at the Cold Springs Baptist Church in Caney Fork, Kentucky. Some 25 to 30 community members were present from this small town near Martin, Kentucky. Joe Blackburn, Lexington Field Office Director and Gail Smith, Regulatory Program Manager, attended for OSM along with Jennifer Thompson, DNR policy advisor, Jim Dickinson, Director, DMRE and Rob Frasier, Supervisor, Division of Mine Permits.

The meeting was initiated by a citizen's request from the community of Caney Fork to OSM in which it was stated the community had grave concerns about the pending issuance of a surface mining permit. The concerns included:

- The on-going effects of blasting at the existing mine site and pending issuance of another major permit in the same area.
- Various members of the community felt that DMRE inspectors from the local regional office in Prestonsburg had not been as responsive as they could have been to complaints filed by several community members.
- Long term effects of water pollution resulting from mountain top removal operations.

The citizens' complaints were addressed at some length. Mining maps of the proposed operation were displayed and various community members were asked to identify any homes or cemeteries that had not been marked on the mine reclamation map. The permitting procedure and the process by which a permit is reviewed, particularly the blasting plan were thoroughly discussed.

Concerns about air blast vibration were addressed and Dickinson explained to the audience that his office would investigate any complaint in which there was an allegation of damage. The pre-blast survey process was reviewed each citizen was reminded that any member of the community could request an updated survey.

The result of the meeting was basically positive in that the representatives of OSM and DNR were able to engage in a constructive conversation with members of the community. While they were not completely satisfied with the answers provided at the meeting, a couple of the community members expressed their appreciation that representatives of the government were willing to come to their community and listen to their concerns.

According to Dickinson, "The division received 817 citizen requests for inspection in 2009. We understand that responding to citizen complaints is a valid and important function of this division and we will make every effort to respond timely to any request. Meetings like the one with the citizens of Caney Fork provide an excellent opportunity for all affected parties to openly and civilly discuss their issues of concern. While common ground is not always established, generally all of those involved leave with a better understanding of the issues".

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Photo by
J. Hamon